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ABSTRACT

This paper presents a literature review on governance and structure of higher education and a case study of a governance review in Nova Scotia (Canada), paying particular attention to the role of intermediary bodies between universities and governments. Types of governing structures are described. Issues in determining the ideal structure are then discussed, focusing on the principles of quality, accessibility, diversity, autonomy and accountability, incentives, and freedom. The paper then presents a counterbalance of these ideals with the reality of a recent case study where politics, both governmental and institutional, appeared more important than ideals. Four governance options developed by consultants to the Council of Nova Scotia University Presidents (CONSUP) are described, followed by the CONSUP modified version, and the response of Nova Scotia's government in granting executive authority to the Nova Scotia Council on Higher Education on the matter of funding allocations. The paper concludes that many governance problems stem from scarcity of resources, that institutions need to work closely with one another to ensure the best use of the available resources, and that an independent and effective coordinating body would be an invaluable aid to ensuring that Nova Scotians have access to postsecondary education of the highest quality. (Contains 19 references.) (GLR)

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IDEALS OR REALITY:
THE POLITICS OF UNIVERSITY GOVERNANCE

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IDEALS OR REALITY:
THE POLITICS OF UNIVERSITY GOVERNANCE

ABSTRACT

In reviewing the literature on the governance and structure of higher education, this paper will pay particular attention to the role of intermediary bodies between universities and governments. It will discuss ideals (from a university perspective) in terms of structure, principles, and authority. The paper will then counterbalance these ideals with the reality of a recent case study where politics, both governmental and institutional, appeared more important than ideals.

INTRODUCTION

In Canada, higher education is the responsibility of the provinces. The province of Nova Scotia has a long history of university education. This history dates back to 1789 and the founding of the University of King's College--Canada's first university.

Nova Scotia currently has thirteen degree granting institutions within its university system--in a province of less than 1,000,000 people. Nine of the thirteen institutions were founded prior to 1900. The institutions range in size from 79 full-time equivalent students (Atlantic School of Theology), to just over 9,600 (Dalhousie University). In total, there were 32,019 full-time equivalent students attending the thirteen institutions that comprised the Nova Scotia university system during the 1990-91 academic year.

Although there are thirteen degree granting institutions in the province of Nova Scotia, and seven within the municipal boundaries of the City of Halifax, each is unique with its own distinct mission and style. To demonstrate this uniqueness, the institutions can be differentiated in various ways. One way of grouping them is as follows:

- Five institutions are highly specialized and offer a limited range of programmes. They are:

  - Atlantic School of Theology - an ecumenical school of theology and Christian ministry;
  - Technical University of Nova Scotia - architecture, engineering, planning, food science and computer science;
  - Nova Scotia College of Art and Design - visual arts and design;
  - Nova Scotia Teachers College - teacher training; and
  - Nova Scotia Agricultural College - agricultural education and training.

- Two comprehensive, predominantly undergraduate, institutions have very unique missions. They are:
  - Mount Saint Vincent University - the only university dedicated to the higher education of women in Canada; and
  - Université Sainte-Anne - the only Francophone university in Nova Scotia.

- Three other comprehensive, predominantly undergraduate, institutions are located in specific geographical areas of the province. They are:
  - Acadia University - Annapolis Valley;
  - Saint Francis Xavier University - the north eastern mainland of Nova Scotia; and
  - University College of Cape Breton - Cape Breton Island.

- The University of King's College, Canada's oldest university, is a small undergraduate institution focused on the Humanities, Social Sciences and Journalism. It is closely affiliated with, and actually located on the campus of Dalhousie University.

- Dalhousie University is the largest of the institutions and is the only one offering a wide range of programmes at both the undergraduate and graduate level, including major professional schools of Law, Medicine, and Dentistry.

- Saint Mary's University is also differentiated in that it is the largest comprehensive, predominantly undergraduate institution and sees itself as part of the "new breed of metropolitan universities" which are dedicated to public accessibility and international and community outreach.

Each university was established through an act of the Legislature. Eleven of the thirteen institutions operate under private boards while two (Nova Scotia Agricultural College and Nova Scotia Teachers College) are administered by government departments. All receive the majority of their funding from the province.

Higher education in Nova Scotia falls under the Ministry of Education, and the universities are accountable to the government through two advisory bodies--the Nova Scotia Council on Higher Education and the Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission. Other formal bodies include the Association of Atlantic Universities and the Council of Nova Scotia University Presidents.

BACKGROUND

The government of Nova Scotia became directly involved in matters concerning the universities in the early 1960's. It was at this time that the Nova Scotia government became involved in funding universities. To facilitate this process what was known as the Nova Scotia Grants Commission was created, with a mandate to distribute government money to the universities in support of higher education.

By the early 1970's the province recognized a need for regional cooperation in higher education. Thus, in 1973 the Nova Scotia government entered into a partnership with the provinces of New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island for the purpose of attaining a more efficient and effective utilization and allocation of resources in the field of higher education in the region. In 1973

the Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission (MPHEC) was established as an advisory body to the Council of Maritime Premiers and its first year of operation was 1974-75.

As early as 1977-78, the MPHEC recognized inequities in the level of government support received by Nova Scotian institutions and recommended a process of equalization. As the equalization process dragged on during the late seventies and early 1980's, most institutions in the province became frustrated with their level of government support. Those receiving equalization were frustrated by how long it was taking, while institutions who were not receiving equalization payments were upset with the perceived higher level of support being given to others. Many were upset with the government's continuous intervention and manipulation of higher education for political purposes. By 1983 frustration had risen to the point where the Nova Scotia government appointed a Royal Commission on Post-secondary Education.

In its 1985 report, the Royal Commission recommended that

> A provincial intermediary body, called the Nova Scotia Council on Higher Education, should be established and endowed with executive authority and discretionary powers over funding in order to ensure that university planning,

> programming and resource allocation are performed in the context of a provincial university system (p. 4-38).

The Commission went on to recommend that the "Council must respect the autonomy of the universities and the academic freedom of the faculty." It also recommended that a regional agency be maintained "for the purposes of data collection and coordination of specific programmes of regional importance" and that the Nova Scotia government renegotiate its partnership with MPHEC.

Thus, the Royal Commission envisioned the NSCHE as a coordinating agency with executive powers. Rather than follow the advice of the Royal Commission, the government instead chose to remain a partner in MPHEC and allow the Nova Scotia representatives on MPHEC to caucus as the NSCHE. When this did not achieve the ends desired, the government began giving more and more authority to the NSCHE, to the point that there has been much confusion over the mandate of the NSCHE, and its and the universities relation to the MPHEC.

Following the Royal Commission Report, the funding formula remained unchanged and the institutions were, therefore, still dissatisfied with how financial resources were allocated to the institutions and with the perceived government interference in this process. As well, institutions were frustrated with the fact that each year the

MPHEC would make a recommendation to the three Maritime provinces with respect to the level of funding required to support higher education in their province, and each year the governments of New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island would follow the MPHEC's advice and the government of Nova Scotia would not. Thus, the province of Nova Scotia had established a history of providing funding at a substantially lower level than that recommended by the MPHEC.

Consequently, in 1988 the MPHEC, under pressure from the universities, initiated a review of the funding formula. Aside from recommending a new funding arrangement, this review also recommended that each institution define its specific role and planned capacity for the next five years (MPHEC, 1991).

For Nova Scotia, the institutional statements of role and planned capacity were produced during the summer of 1989. The statements were reviewed jointly by the MPHEC and the NSCHE. Based on these statements the NSCHE and the MPHEC recommended a "rationalization" of academic programme offerings in the province of Nova Scotia. The eight academic programmes specifically identified for "rationalization" were business schools, education programming, physical education, home economics, computer science and computer-related programmes, nursing education, geology, and engineering.

The issue of "rationalization" was referred to the Council of Nova Scotia University Presidents (CONSUP) for action.

It was in the midst of dealing with the issue of "rationalization" that the issue of governance surfaced. The raising of this issue prompted CONSUP to initiate a review of the structure and governance of higher education in the province of Nova Scotia. The purpose of the review was to "identify options for a structure for the future development of a coordinated, province-wide university system, comprising individual but interconnected institutions with clearly differentiated roles". The main issues in the review were the autonomy of the institutions versus their accountability to the government and the public, and the proper role of government in the governance of higher education in the province.

THE REVIEW PROCESS

With this in mind, CONSUP recommended that the government, through the Nova Scotia Council on Higher Education, hire three individuals with senior university administrative experience to conduct a governance review. CONSUP selected the consultants and chose: Dr. Stephan Dupré, faculty member, University of Toronto and former chair of the Ontario Council of University Affairs (the equivalent

of MPHEC in Ontario); Dr. Marsha Hanen, President, University of Winnipeg; and Dr. Moses Morgan, former President of Memorial University of Newfoundland.

During the course of their review, the consultants were to meet with: the Minister of Education; members of the NSCHE; the MPHEC; the presidents of all CONSUP institutions and other appropriate members of the university communities; and other relevant organizations and individuals (i.e., the Nova Scotia Council of University Faculty Associations, and Student Unions of Nova Scotia). The consultants were instructed to identify and offer advice concerning at least three options for a permanent structure to govern higher education in the province, and to report these options to the Minister, CONSUP and the NSCHE. CONSUP was to discuss the options presented by the consultants and to make a recommendation to the Minister. The entire process was to take less than two months (August and September, 1991).

Each institution was asked to prepare a written brief outlining its views on how the system should be structured and governed. Saint Mary's University began with a review of the literature.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In a review of the literature on the governance of higher education, one encounters the argument of centralized versus decentralized systems of control. As a result, there are those who will argue that discussion on centralized versus decentralized systems of control is part of a cyclic and never-ending process. Each approach has both negative and positive aspects, and as the negative aspects of the system adopted begin to surface, a change in approach is undoubtedly suggested. Consequently, systems which were centralized move to decentralize, and vice versa.

In spite of this argument, however, it is widely accepted that if changes are to be made in universities consistent with the public interest, some external influence is necessary (Birnbaum, 1991; Berdahl, 1990[a], 1990[b]). The question, then, is one of balance--balance between institutional autonomy and accountability to the public. From this stems the question of the proper role of government in the governance of higher education.

Birnbaum (1991) argued that

> ... the proper role of government is not to monitor quality but to monitor the monitoring of quality; not to ensure that the institutions are doing the right thing,

> but rather that the institutions have in place systems for detecting and responding to feedback; not to prevent the institutions from error but to ensure that they have the means to detect and correct error. Institutions should have the right to be wrong; they shouldn't have the right to be capricious.

Thus, the role of governance structures "should not be to prevent institutions from making mistakes, but to ensure that they learn from their experiences and are accountable for outcomes" (p. 146).

Birnbaum recommended a cybernetic system which provides incentives to encourage leadership from within the institution; allows for flexibility, diversity, and variation; and leaves the decision to participate or not at the institutional level. Instead of focusing on inputs, he suggests a focus on outputs. He agrees with Berdahl, who suggests that "tensions arising in the area of substantive autonomy can be interpreted as a healthy confrontation between ambitious, creative universities and colleges, and state governments with limited resources and diverse priorities" (1990[b]: 42). Birnbaum suggests that the critical aspect of a university system, in the long run, may not be how well it currently achieves its objectives, but how sensitive it is to its failures and how flexible it is to change.

Regardless of the type of structure adopted for governing higher education, Ashby (1966) argued that the following are "essential ingredients" of any system:

- institutional freedom to select staff and students and to determine the conditions under which they remain in the university;

- freedom to determine curriculum content and degree standards; and

- freedom to allocate funds (within the amounts available) across different categories of expenditures (p. 296).

Types of Governing Structures

Three types of governing structures were identified by Berdahl in 1971. They are:

a) Consolidated Governing Boards - possess authority over budget distribution, program approval, and appointment of senior personnel (Presidents, Vice Presidents and Deans)

and normally replace an individual institution's Board of Governors.

b) Coordinating Boards - generally prepare and maintain master plans, review and recommend budgets and approve new degree programmes.

c) Advisory Boards - these typically have planning and informational functions but they would not approve new programmes (they would recommend for approval) and they would or would not have authority to recommend operating and capital budgets.

Consolidated Governing Board

Twenty-three U.S. states and Puerto Rico currently have consolidated governing boards (McGuiness, 1991). The primary advantage of this type of structure has been its authority to govern individual campuses. In governing, these Boards are entitled to define and enforce institutional missions, fix admission standards, allocate resources, select and appoint chief administrative officers, and set operating budgets (Berdahl, Chait, Schmidtlein and Martin Studds, 1987).

Unfortunately, the literature on structure and governance in higher education suggests that consolidated governing boards are highly criticized and rarely adopted. The most telling sign of this is in the U.S.A.

> ... in the 15 or so states where this option has been considered in the last 10 years, it has been adopted in only one. In all others, the choice has been to retain but strengthen an existing coordinating mechanism while maintaining a separate system of institutional governance (McGuiness, 1986).

Graham (1989) points out that

> ... the chief lesson seems to be that the allure of statewide governing boards as take-charge superboards, based on a corporate model and promising a low-cost quick fix in the face of institutional competition and claimed inefficiencies, may be a remedy that is worse than the alleged disease (p. 93).

A 1984 study by Millett of the governance of higher education within 25 U.S. states uncovered an overwhelming sense of public disillusionment with consolidated governing boards as effective instruments for rationalizing competing needs in higher education. Although these boards were created as instruments of centralized

control, they infrequently and with great restraint used the powers they had been given and instead, in many instances, had become advocates for the institutions they were supposed to control.

Criticism of consolidated governing boards also includes their tendency to become preoccupied with governance, administration, and fiscal accountability at the expense of planning and quality issues (Berdahl, 1990[a]). Consequently, important policy issues are often sacrificed to more urgent administrative matters (Berdahl et al, 1987).

Other shortcomings include their increased costs, since central administration is added on top of already existing university administrations, and their inflexibility when dealing quickly with problems which inevitably arise. Additionally, centralization tends to bring with it conformity rather than diversity and a single point of view rather than a variety of opinions and values. As McGuiness (1991) points out

> Bureaucratic coordination tends to push convergence toward single goals and priorities--a tendency which runs directly contrary to a widely acknowledged characteristic of an excellent higher education system: its capacity to encourage pursuit of multiple--and often conflicting--goals, objectives, priorities and missions (p. 16).

Coordinating Board

According to McGuiness (1991), twenty-four U.S. states have adopted this approach to university governance. This type of structure acts as a broker between contending interests. However, they lack independent power to "manage" the individual institutions and are therefore able to concentrate their attention on system matters. Consequently, coordination is seen to permit the institutional autonomy necessary for excellence, experimentation, and vitality.

The lack of independent power is seen by some researchers as a strength and by others as a weakness. It is argued that without the power to command, coordinating boards end up searching for compromises which leave both parties dissatisfied. However, given the power to review budgets, approve programs, and review capital outlay, the perception of weakness is diminished (Berdahl et al, 1987).

In a Peters and Waterman study entitled *Searching for Academic Excellence* (Gilley, Fulmer and Reithlingshoefer, 1986), the authors discovered that

> ... in the 20 institutions we visited, there was not one instance of a state coordinating board level initiative

that improved quality; promoted efficiency; addressed a major societal or educational issue; encouraged an institution to seek new levels of excellence; or anticipated trends or issues. Instead, we discovered that in the public institutions, state coordinating agencies constituted one of the most significant obstacles to innovation and change.

Advisory Board

Only three U.S. states and the District of Columbia have this type of governing structure (McGuiness, 1991). Advisory boards are seen to have limited planning authority and they are generally not involved in the range of functions normally performed by coordinating boards.

In Millett's 1984 study it was found that neither consolidated nor coordinating boards were capable of effective master planning. They become too entangled in the administrative concerns of their institutions, thus losing the perspective and vision necessary for planning. Consequently, the structure which has received the greatest praise for disinterested long-range planning is the advisory board. The major problem with advisory boards, however, is their lack of power to act. If not taken seriously by either

the institutions or the government, they quickly become ineffective. As Berdahl (1990[a]) is quick to point out, "voluntary cooperation normally is unable to take the tough decisions" (p.173) and therefore some form of intervention is required.

THE ISSUES

In considering what constitutes the ideal structure for governing higher education, it would appear that one must first resolve a number of issues. A major issue is that of focus, "What is to be the main focus of such a structure--quality or accountability?".

It has been stated that if the focus is quality, the governance structure may be unimportant. Newman (1987) points out that the key to quality is the value government places on higher education and the resources they put into it. Without adequate resources a governing structure will not ensure quality.

If the focus is to be accountability then the question appears to be one of balance. What would be the appropriate balance between accountability and institutional autonomy? Where should we draw the line between external influence and self correction versus external interference? If we choose influence over interference,

then we must agree that institutions should rely on their own wisdom to decide what to do, and then must accept responsibility and accountability for the decisions they make (Birnbaum, 1990).

In addressing these questions, it is important to note that many believe that structures rarely resolve problems. There is no evidence in the literature that changes in governance alone necessarily solve problems. Of equal or greater importance are adequate funding and strong leaders (Schmidtlein, 1987).

Although structures alone cannot solve problems, they can cause them (Schmidtlein, 1987). The adoption of an inappropriate structure can have a long-lasting, detrimental, and costly effect. It has also been found that once in place, efforts to eliminate governing structures which have demonstrably failed, as in the case of Colorado and Florida, have been unsuccessful (Mayhew, Ford & Hubbard, 1990).

As Schmidtlein and Berdahl (1991: p.18) conclude "...a state's unique history, personalities and political relationships are usually more important than structures in influencing the success of its higher education system."

THE IDEALS

When considering what would constitute the ideal structure for the governance of universities in the province of Nova Scotia, it should be noted that the focus of this review was accountability. The government wanted the universities to "rationalize" their academic offerings in an attempt to hold them accountable for their use of public funds the, ultimate goal of which was to save money.

The institutions, on the other hand, wanted to maintain their autonomy. In trying to protect this autonomy they were generally more suspicious of the intentions of their sister institutions than they were of the government's intentions. The greatest fear for many institutions was the possibility of the amalgamation of autonomous institutions into a University of Nova Scotia or a University of Halifax under a consolidated governing board. Although this possibility had been ruled out in the 1985 Royal Commission report, it was once again being proposed as the "vision" for the system by the largest institution in the province.

Each institution was given an opportunity to make both a written submission and an oral presentation to the consultants conducting the governance review. In preparing for their presentations, each institution prepared a brief outlining what it believed would be

the most appropriate structure for governing higher education in the province. The following are the "ideals" from the perspective of one institution.

From The Perspective of Saint Mary's University

Based on the research literature and its own philosophy, the ideal structure from the perspective of Saint Mary's University, was one based on the following general principles:

1) **Quality.** The promotion of teaching, research, and community service of the highest calibre should be the first priority. As the Nova Scotia Royal Commission on Post-secondary Education stated, the aim should be "the provision of the highest quality of education possible for the level of resources available, rather than the provision of education for the lowest cost possible" (p. 4-22).

2) **Accessibility.** The system must ensure access to full and part-time higher education both on campus and at a distance, for both represented and under-represented groups.

3) **Diversity.** Maintaining a system of education which offers to the public a variety of educational opportunities and which

will adapt through time to the changing needs of the population.

4) **Autonomy and Accountability.** A balance between autonomy and accountability must be achieved in all areas (not just financial) whereby the protection and encouragement of institutional self-governance is preserved, while at the same time promoting accountability on the part of the institutions. Institutions must retain the right to decide what they do and how they do it, while at the same time accepting the responsibility and accountability for the decisions they make.

5) **Incentives.** Establishment of a reward mechanism to recognize those institutions which are able to demonstrate that they have achieved their goals, both qualitative and quantitative, as well as demonstrating fiscal responsibility.

6) **Freedom.** The province must provide and protect an environment in which faculty and students may openly express diverse points of view, consistent with the demands of academic freedom.

Structurally, Saint Mary's University felt the ideal intermediary body should be at arms' length from both the government and the

institutions. It should be open and accountable to government, the institutions, and the public; and it should emphasize accountability rather than steering the institutions. More importantly, it should respect institutional autonomy by ensuring decisions on academic policies, academic standards, admission standards, graduation standards, selection and appointment of university staff, the setting of tuition fees, and the allocation of resources within an institution, remain the jurisdiction of the institution.

Moreover, Saint Mary's University believed that the ideal intermediary body would be one with the authority to:

- facilitate long range planning for the system and encourage the efficient use of resources by promoting coordination and cooperation among institutions;

- recommend to government the total funding required for the system to maintain the highest level of quality and diversity possible;

- approve funding for new programmes and initiate system-wide program reviews (using outside consultants), the focus of which are to provide feedback to the institutions on the quality of their programs for the purpose of self-correction and improvement;

- recommend the creation of joint programs or the termination of programs where program reviews have proven over time to be consistently poor and where improvements have not been made after weaknesses were pointed out;

- hold the institutions accountable for their use of public funds by reviewing financial performance to determine cost-efficiencies, and have the ability to provide financial incentives to those institutions who successfully achieve cost-effectiveness, or to recommend to institutions areas for improvement if inefficiencies are discovered;

- monitor areas of weak financial performance for improvement and take action to rectify poor performance if improvements are not made within a reasonable amount of time; and

- commission studies on the quality and responsiveness of the system and act as a repository for data from the institutions and provide a collective memory for the system.

In summary, Saint Mary's University recommended a modification of the Nova Scotia Council on Higher Education. The changes proposed were in keeping with the Council envisioned by the Nova Scotia

Royal Commission on Post-secondary Education in contrast to the Council created by the Nova Scotia government.

REALITY

The Report of the Consultants

The consultants presented four options for CONSUP to consider. The four models were based on the assumption that the structure adopted "should feature interplay between the system and its parts rather than being one in which the system determines the nature of its parts" (Dupré, Hanen, and Morgan, 1991: p.4). Based on this assumption the options of a University of Nova Scotia or a University of Halifax were ruled out.

The consultants also recognized that there was already cooperation among the universities of Nova Scotia and that the potential for extending existing cooperative ventures and developing new ones already existed. They were very impressed with "Interuniversity Services Inc." (a non-profit corporation created by the universities in Halifax to centralize various administrative services and to pool the purchasing power of its member

institutions) and "NOVANET" (an inter-library communication network incorporating the holdings of seven libraries in the province).

Consequently, the four models developed were variations on the already established Nova Scotia Council on Higher Education. The models were incremental in that each option was built on the one before it. Thus, elements of option one were common to all four models, and so on.

The Models

Option One: This option established an arm's length Council and gave it an unrestricted advisory mandate. It recommended continuance of the Council's structure of nine part-time members plus a full-time Chair, and recommended that all members be order-in-council appointees. It differed from the present structure by suggesting that the Chair be given senior deputy minister status.

A second significant change from the status quo was the provision for accountability. The consultants recommended that requests from the Minister for advice be in the form of formal written requests open to public scrutiny, and that the NSCHE's advice to the Minister be a matter of public record--once government decisions had been announced. This had not been the case prior to

this proposal. Matters on which the Minister sought advice and the advice given by the Council were, in many cases, considered confidential.

This option also called for a continuance of the linkages between the NSCHE and the Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission.

Option Two: Building on option one, this option emphasized the NSCHE's specific authority to advise the government in the area of academic programme or administrative unit reviews, and to make recommendations regarding the increase or reduction in funding for any existing program, academic unit or administrative operation. Again, it stressed the need to make the work of the NSCHE in these areas, a matter of public record.

This proposal also differed from the status quo in that it provided for a strengthening of the Council of Nova Scotia University Presidents. The consultants saw CONSUP as an "enormously consequential component" of the university system since it was viewed as the "voice of the collectivity". The problem, however, was that CONSUP had always operated as an informal body, with the Chair carrying the administrative burden for the group. Thus, this option suggested that CONSUP hire an Administrative Officer to ease

the administrative burden and to provide a secretariat for ad hoc committees established by CONSUP.

Option Three: This option turned the CONSUP administrative officer into an Executive Director with status comparable to a university president and the Chair of the NSCHE. It also proposed that CONSUP play an active role with the NSCHE in the area of programme review.

Option Four: The final option proposed a transformation of the NSCHE from merely an advisory body to one with legislated executive authority. Specifically, it would have the authority to decide rather than recommend in areas of programme review and funding allocations.

The CONSUP Proposal to the Minister

The Council of Nova Scotia University President's responded to the report of the Consultants by reaffirming its collective vision that regardless of the structure adopted, it must respect the strengths and uniqueness of the individual institutions. Rather than endorsing a specific option outlined by the consultants (understanding that 13 university presidents, each of whom had their own view of how the system should be structured, had to

present a collective vision), CONSUP chose to recommend a modified version of the options presented.

The CONSUP recommendation endorsed the following recommendations made by the consultants and modified by CONSUP:

- the nine-member Council and the senior deputy minister status of the Chair, however, CONSUP wanted to be consulted with respect to the appointment of the Chair;

- the Council's unrestricted advisory mandate, but again, CONSUP wanted to be consulted prior to the NSCHE rendering advice on financial matters;

- the formal and public nature of both the Minister's requests for advice and the advice given by the NSCHE and the concept of public access to all reports produced by the Council or its committees;

- that the NSCHE have the authority to create joint standing and ad hoc committees as long as this is done in consultation with CONSUP; and

- that CONSUP acquire administrative resources but not to the extent of hiring an Executive Director.

Additional recommendations of CONSUP, not mentioned by the consultants, included:

- provision for at least one meeting annually between CONSUP and the NSCHE;

- that the NSCHE rather than the MPHEC be responsible for the assessment of new programme proposals and that the MPHEC be involved only when such proposals had regional implications; and

- that the NSCHE be responsible for issuing an annual report.

CONSUP and the consultants differed in opinion on a number of issues. One of those issues was the matter of programme review. Although CONSUP fully embraced the notion of system-wide review of similar programmes, it felt that the purpose of the review should be to provide feedback to the institutions and therefore CONSUP, rather than the NSCHE, should have responsibility for the review process. It envisioned the role of the NSCHE in this process as that of monitoring the responses of the institutions to the

recommendations resulting from the reviews, and to participating with CONSUP in dealing with cases where institutions were deemed not to have taken appropriate action in implementing the results of a review.

CONSUP also did not endorse the consultants' suggestion of giving the NSCHE executive authority.

The Minister's Response to CONSUP

To date, the government has responded to the governance review by publicly affirming its belief that a University of Nova Scotia or a University of Halifax is not the answer with respect to how best to govern higher education in the province of Nova Scotia. It has also publicly stated its commitment to maintaining ties with the Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission and to maintaining the Nova Scotia Council on Higher Education. It is currently in the process of conducting a national search for a new Chairperson of the NSCHE.

Oddly enough, in contradiction of what CONSUP had recommended, the government has also announced its intention to grant executive authority to the NSCHE on the matter of funding allocations. In

advising the universities of this decision it quotes from the recommendations of the 1985 Royal Commission Report. This legislation is expected to be introduced at the up-coming sitting of the legislature. Thus, it would appear that Nova Scotia has come full circle with respect to how the system of universities in the province should be governed--returning in 1992 to recommendations made in 1985.

Late Breaking Events

Unfortunately, it does not end here. Having not succeeded in convincing the consultants, CONSUP, or the government that a consolidated governing approach would best serve the interests of Nova Scotians, one university continues to push for a new "vision" for the system, and refuses to allow the possibility of a University of Nova Scotia or a University of Halifax to be put to rest. In preparation for an up-coming CONSUP workshop aimed at articulating a long-term view of the system as a whole, this university invited a spokesperson from the Board of Regents of the University of Maryland system, to explain to the academic community the benefits of consolidated governance.

Thus, the politics of university governance continue.

CONCLUSION

Many believe that the problems which have arisen with regard to the structure and governance of higher education in the province of Nova Scotia are the result of government interference and inadequate funding levels. The disputes between institutions, and between institutions and the government, have for the most part been over money. Evidence of this is the most recent call for "rationalization" which was initiated as an attempt on the part of the government to save money. With this in mind, it should be noted that any change in governance structure will find it difficult to resolve this problem.

It would be foolhardy to think, however, that resources will not be scarce in the foreseeable future. Therefore, it is imperative that institutions work closely with one another to ensure the best use of those resources. To that end, an independent and effective coordinating body should act as a valuable aid to ensure that Nova Scotians have access to post-secondary education of the highest quality.

Money aside, Nova Scotia has a system of higher education of which it can be proud. The accessibility of higher education to Nova

Scotians and the variety of educational opportunities available make it second to none in Canada. The level of cooperation which already exists between institutions is also noteworthy. However, as long as short-term political concerns continue to take priority over long-term educational imperatives, higher education will always be in turmoil in Nova Scotia.

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